

**27 ANKETELL Richard John (1862-1928)**

**Roman Catholic DB 229**

Richard Anketell was born in Melbourne in 1862, and as a young man joined a survey team as a chainman with the Victorian Railways. He later qualified as a surveyor/engineer and his subsequent employment during the 1880s included the survey of various railway lines in Victoria and Tasmania. Anketell came to Western Australia and was employed by the Public Works Department to survey a telegraph line from Nannine to Peak Hill and the railway line from Marble Bar to Port Hedland. As Resident Engineer he was also supervisor of the Southern Cross – Coolgardie Railway works. In 1901 he was a member of the preliminary team that surveyed the Western Australian section of the Transcontinental Railway. In addition to this work, he was Supervisor of the enormous project for the Rabbit proof fence and the erection of three sections over 2,073 miles. In 1908, Richard Anketell was the Chief Surveyor of the Transcontinental Survey which used ninety camels for transport and haulage and employed forty men.



During and after World War I Anketell used his considerable engineering skills for harbour projects and many wheatbelt railways throughout the State. As Executive Engineer for Public Works, his last great project was the drainage of the Peel Estate. The drainage was necessary to render the land suitable for farming by the settlers in the Group Settlement Scheme following the War. Richard John Anketell spent most of his life working in remote, uninhabited locations, and his expeditions opened up large areas of the country. He was a pioneer explorer and his management of men, animals and equipment in the outback was legendary.

